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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 000905

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (Classified by statement)

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR HONDURAS TASK FORCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/25/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ES](#)

SUBJECT: BORDER CLOSURES WITH HONDURAS ORDERLY

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 967

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Official Salvadoran border closures due to the Honduran curfew have been orderly. Protesters from both sides did block traffic for a few hours each mid-day from September 20-23, in demonstrations coordinated with the local authorities. There are reports of increased AmCit traffic out of Honduras into El Salvador, approximately 130 each day.

Conservative media reports continue to suggest Honduran President Zelaya likely entered Honduras by crossing the Salvadoran-Honduran border. Zelaya did meet with FMLN hardliners at the international airport Sunday evening, September 20. If they helped him enter Honduras, such an action would have been in direct defiance of President Funes' authority. End Summary.

BORDER CLOSINGS AND PROTESTS

¶2. (U) Emboff visiting Salvadoran-Honduran border reports that official border closures due to the curfew have been orderly. During the first two hours of the border reopening, all traffic is processed into Honduras to allow travelers and commerce to pass and make the most of non-curfew hours. The final two hours prior to the curfew are dedicated to getting traffic out of Honduras. Otherwise, the border crossing is operating normally in both directions when open.

¶3. (U) From September 20-23, between 70-200 protesters would meet in the middle of the bridge between El Salvador and Honduras during mid-days and block traffic. Reports were not conclusive as to where the protesters originated from or their political leanings, but more appear to be from Honduras. The protests were orderly and negotiated with authorities on both sides of the border.

¶4. (U) AmCit traffic out of Honduras has increased to about 130 per day at this crossing, El Amatillo. The traffic does not seem to be substantial, and we are unable to gauge the scale of the increase.

ZELAYA'S RETURN ENGINEERED BY FMLN?

¶5. (C) Conservative media continue to report that Honduran President Zelaya likely entered Honduras by crossing the Salvadoran-Honduran border. Salvador Samayoa (strictly protect) told Emboff September 22 that he believes, based on what he described as a credible, authoritative source, that Zelaya entered Honduras from El Salvador with the assistance of hard-line members of the FMLN. The (conservative) ARENA

party has called for an official inquiry in the Salvadoran legislature.

¶6. (C) Comment: We would estimate that there was a 50 percent chance that Zelaya entered Honduras via El Salvador. (The other 50 percent speculates that Zelaya re-boarded the same Venezuelan plane that brought him here on Sunday night and flew to Guatemala, then made his way overland from there.) FMLN hard-liners have advocated for stronger action to return Zelaya to power and they are intimately familiar with the border region from their years there during the civil war. If proven true, it will have been a direct challenge to President Funes' authority, as Funes had stated unequivocally that he would not permit El Salvador to be used as a staging area for any Zelaya operations.
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